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ABSTRACT

During a review of the Higher Education Act (HEA), concern about the quality of teacher education emerged. As a result, Congress created a new teacher quality section in HEA known as Title II, which established grant programs for partnerships between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education and for states to improve teacher quality. It also established new accountability requirements for states and teacher preparation institutions. Congress mandated through Title II that any institutions preparing teachers that received funds through HEA, and any states that received HEA monies, submit annual reports on their efforts to improve teaching quality. These provisions gather information on, and rank within states, teacher preparation institutions. Strong sanctions are associated with Title II for institutions that do not submit reports or provide inaccurate information. States must compile all data submitted by colleges and universities and present information on licensure and certification. A consultative committee of individuals from states, higher education institutions, and the policy community was appointed to help the National Center for Education Statistics construct a reporting system. Reporting guidelines for use by institutions and states covered under HEA Title II were published in 2000. (SM)

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Title II Requirements for Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education

Penelope M. Earley

The Higher Education Act (HEA) was one of President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" programs designed to provide financial support for low-income youth to pursue postsecondary education. The HEA, like many large federal programs, is periodically examined by Congress and updated through amendments. This process is called reauthorization and occurs approximately every five years. In 1996 Congress began one of these reviews, which culminated in November 1998 with President Clinton signing the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (P.L. 105-422).

During the review of HEA, concern about the quality of teacher education emerged (Earley, 2000). Although Federal programs to strengthen the teaching force through teacher preparation and professional development grants existed for over 15 years in Title V of HEA, Congress used the 1996-1998 amendment process as an opportunity to make major revisions in that portion of the law. This was done by abolishing the Title V programs and creating a new Teacher Quality section in HEA known as Title II. The new Title II had two purposes: Sections 202-205 established grant programs for partnerships between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education and for states to improve teacher quality, while sections 206, 207, and 208 laid out new accountability requirements for states and institutions that prepare teachers (Higher Education Amendments, 1998). It is the accountability provisions in Sections 207 and 208 that are the focus of this digest.

Influencing the Policy Agenda

Legislative decisions do not occur in a vacuum, and often events that influence lawmakers are external to the formal policy making process (Kingdon, 1995). In the case of the Title II accountability provisions, a catalyst that brought focus to teacher education was the 1996 release of What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). This report presented a framework for reforming teacher education. The National Commission's recommendations stressed actions that should be taken by institutions of higher education, state teacher licensing agencies, and local schools; however, members of Congress felt national directives also were necessary (Earley, 2000; Miller 2001).

The high visibility given to What Matters Most in the press led to some vocal opposition to teacher education (Earley, 2000). This opposition came primarily from groups and individuals who supported elimination of teacher licensure and endorsed a free-market approach to teacher recruitment and hiring (Ballou & Pordgursky, 1997). Thus, as Congress considered how to revise HEA, the information lawmakers heard about teacher education could be classified into three general messages:

- The current preparation of teachers is inadequate;
- Teacher education should be guided by strong standards (as proposed by NCTAF); and
- Formal teacher education is unnecessary, as characterized by NCTAF critics.

Because the federal government is limited in its ability to impose college-level curriculum or to set state licensure standards for educators, the Congress focused on the first message. It addressed perceived deficiencies in teacher preparation by mandating through Title II that any institutions preparing teachers that receive funds through HEA for any purpose, and any states that receive HEA monies submit to Congress annual reports on their efforts to improve the quality of teaching. Sections 207 and 208 of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 detail these reporting requirements.

Higher Education Reporting Requirements

The provisions in Title II, Sec. 207 and Sec. 208 are designed to gather information on, and rank within states, institutions that prepare teachers. As Miller (2001) points out, the reasoning behind these provisions is to urge college and university presidents to direct energy and resources toward improving the teacher education programs on their campuses. Consequently, each year that the law is in effect, colleges and universities must report the following information to their state:

- The pass rates of students who have completed a teacher education program on each of the state's licensure examinations. (Examinations taken by fewer than 10 students are included only in aggregated data in order to protect public disclosure of exam results when only a few students take the exam each year.)
- The number of students enrolled in teacher education programs.
- The number of hours each teacher education student is required to complete in practice teaching and the faculty-student ratio in this part of the program.
- Whether or not the college or university's teacher education program is approved or accredited by the state.
- Whether or not the state has identified the institution's teacher education program as low-performing. In addition, the law specifies that institutions may submit supplemental information about their program, such as characteristics of students they enroll, the community they serve, the institution's mission, and the like. The optional supplemental information may be used to present a broader institutional picture than that given by exam pass rates and other quantitative data. Colleges and universities must also make this information available to the public, potential students, and prospective employers of their teacher education graduates (Higher Education Amendments, 1998).

Strong sanctions are associated with Title II. Institutions that do not submit reports or intentionally provide inaccurate information could be fined $25,000. Moreover, each state is required by law to develop criteria to flag low-performing colleges and universities. These criteria may or may not include test scores, but once in place, if an institution is identified as low-performing and has not improved after receiving technical assistance from the state, it may lose eligibility to receive federal grants to support educator professional development and may not enroll a student in its teacher education program who receives student financial aid under Title IV of

HEA.

State Requirements

States need to compile all data submitted by colleges and universities. In addition, the state is expected to:

- Describe its licensure requirements and all assessments that are used as part of the teacher credentialing process.
- Explain the extent to which there is alignment between the teacher education licensure requirements and K-12 content standards.
- Report the qualifying scores and percentage of candidates who pass each teacher licensure exam for each program in the state. (This provision was subsequently modified by the U.S. Department of Education to require that institutional comparisons within states be done by "adjusted quartiles.") (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).
- The number of licensure waivers granted by the state disaggregated by teaching subject and by high- and low-poverty school districts.
- A description of any alternative routes to teaching in the state and the percentage of students in these programs who pass the licensure exams.
- The criteria used to approve a teacher education program unit.
- Information about any and all subject matter examinations teachers or future teachers must take. Beginning in 2001 and each year thereafter this information must be reported to the U.S. Department of Education to be used by the Secretary of Education in an annual report to the Congress on teacher quality.

Implementing Title II

Title II states that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education must establish a reporting system to comply with an implementation time line specified by law. Since Title II requires consultation with states and institutions of higher education in developing compliance guidelines, a consultative committee of individuals from states, institutions of higher education, and the policy community was appointed to help NCES construct a reporting system (Higher Education Act, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Many difficult questions arose: What is the appropriate definition of a teacher education graduate or program completer? Should the definition of faculty include only campus-based personnel or also include clinical faculty employed primarily at the school site? Is information on "student teaching" or on all clinical experiences within a future teacher's program to be included? Is there a common definition for an alternate route to teaching? What constitutes a licensure waiver? How will institutions in states that do not use a standardized assessment instrument for licensure be ranked? How will the information be made public by colleges and universities, the state, and the Federal government? Struggling with these questions as well as the task of creating a common reporting format for licensure exam scores proved to be significantly more complex than anticipated, and the first Title II reporting deadlines were adjusted, with Congressional approval, to April 2001 for institutions of higher education and October 2001 for states.

Reporting guidelines for use by institutions and states covered under HEA, Title II, were published in May 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2000), yet some issues had not been fully resolved. What will be the cost to institutions and states to comply with this law? Do the Title II reporting guidelines go beyond or reinterpret provisions in Sec. 207 and Sec. 208? Inasmuch as Title II data are not to be used for cross-state comparisons (U.S. Department of Education, 2000), will the data available to the Secretary of Education in October 2001 provide useful information for policymakers? Implementation of Title II, the burden on institutions and states, and the quality of the data the reports produce are being carefully monitored by the Congress (Miller, 2001). However, there will be limited opportunity for significant changes in the Title II requirements until the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2003 or 2004.

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